

## IV. Priority Forest Areas

Priority landscapes or priority areas in Mississippi were defined for each key issue discussed in Chapter III. The following is a list of priority areas for the state by key issue area. Areas that are a priority for multiple states are marked with an asterisk (\*). Priorities that require multi-state emphasis and cooperation include the target area for longleaf pine restoration within the historic range, priority areas for non-native, invasive plant and pest suppression and eradication, and multi-state priorities for afforestation such as agriculture and pasture lands in the Mississippi River Alluvial Plain Ecoregion (through programs such as the Wetlands Reserve Program).

### Priority Areas by Key Issue

#### Issue 1: Forest Sustainability

- Wildfire fuel reduction priority areas
- Natural Range of Longleaf Pine\* **MULTI-STATE**
- Southern Forest Land Assessment high priority areas
- High priority watersheds defined by MDEQ Basin Plans
- Priority areas for invasive species and forest pest programs\* **MULTI-STATE**
- MIFI charts of growth and drain
- Watersheds
- Priority areas for MS Forest Stewardship Program
- Forest Legacy Areas

#### Issue 2: Resource Markets

- Statewide
- Mill allocation by type and status, including new emerging market mills
- Growth to Drain – Areas of state where growth is out pacing usage
- Limited railroad lines in Mississippi
- Limited deep water ports in Mississippi
- Longleaf acres present / historic acreage\* **MULTI-STATE**

#### Issue 3: Land Ownership Policies

##### Priority Landscapes

- Increasing urbanization and (Wildland Urban Interface) WUI areas
  - DeSoto/Tate Counties
  - Tupelo
  - Jackson Metro
  - Meridian
  - Hattiesburg/Laurel
  - Gulf Coast

- Mississippi Forest Legacy Areas as identified in the *Mississippi Forest Legacy Program Assessment of Need*
  - Northeast MS
  - Central MS
  - South MS
- Wildlife Priority Areas
  - Ranked natural forest communities in the *Mississippi Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy*
- Rural forested areas of the state
  - This represents the largest priority area in terms of total land area. Priority Area 4 can be divided by using the state's river basins as delineated by the Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality. To further divide this priority area, each river basin can be separated into its various watersheds.
- Statewide, all property owners

#### Issue 4: Forest Health

##### General

- Invasive plants - Species specific distributions (with emphasis on eradication north of I-20 and suppression south of I-20)
- Pests - Southeast MS, Jackson County and I-10 corridor
- High hazard areas on Southern Pine Beetle Hazard Rating\* **MULTI-STATE**
- Longleaf pine historic distribution in East Central and South MS\* **MULTI-STATE**

##### Plants

- Elimination of cogongrass north of Interstate 20 and suppression of cogongrass south of Interstate 20 \* **MULTI-STATE**
- Using the latest Southern Research Station maps, emphasis will be placed on the counties with the highest percentage of infestation in the fight against kudzu, Japanese and Chinese privet and Japanese climbing fern. Also, by using the Southern Wildfire Risk Assessment, areas of high priority which have a very high percentage of NNIP will take priority in funding for control projects. \* **MULTI-STATE**

**Insert map that shows where the SWRA AND THE SRS MAPS overlap**

##### Non-Native Insects and Disease

- Redbay Ambrosia Beetle - Southeast portion of Mississippi, with special emphasis on Jackson County and the Interstate 10 corridor, where the

problem presently exists. Based on inventory data, plans will also address other areas of concern where *Lauraceae* species are present and/or relatively abundant, particularly areas where threatened or endangered plant species that may be affected occur. \* **MULTI-STATE**

- The initial focus area for the Emerald Ash Borer will be in the counties of Tunica, Sunflower, Humphreys, Sharkey and Issaquena. These counties have a minimum of 10% Ash species in their timber inventories across the county according to the latest MIFI data (see attached map). In addition, municipalities with large inventories of ash trees in their cities will also be a priority focus area.\* **MULTI-STATE**
- Geospatial examination of inventory data will be utilized to target at risk areas containing abundant or valuable black walnut (for TCD), maple (for ALB), and oak (for SOD).
- The statewide SPB hazard rating map will be utilized to identify areas of pine resources particularly at risk for Sirex woodwasp. As part of identifying and prioritizing landscapes and focus areas for program delivery for all of these non-native, invasive pests, higher risk introduction pathways such as ports, transportation corridors, distribution centers, campgrounds, nurseries, etc., will be considered and reflected in action plans or response plans.\* **MULTI-STATE**

### **Southern Pine Beetle**

- Historical data available from 1960 – 1996, southwest MS will be a target area to focus on for further emphasis of SPB prevention programs.
- SPB hazard rating maps, many areas in southeast MS and east Central MS show up as a high hazard area. These maps will be used to determine priority areas where we will focus prevention work such as thinning programs and workshops. \* **MULTI-STATE**
- The native range maps of longleaf pine will be used to determine the priority landscape areas for the longleaf pine restoration projects.\* **MULTI-STATE**

### **Diversity**

- Native range for Longleaf pine restoration project. \***MULTI-STATE**

### **Issue 5: Stewardship Education**

- Statewide for general stewardship education
- Underserved populations by county
- Priority areas of Mississippi identified in other key issue areas and S & PF programs
- Urban expansion areas within Forest Legacy Areas

### **Issue 6: Wildfire Fuel Reduction**

- Southern Wildfire Risk Assessment (SWRA) – Identifies Community at Risk (CAR), high fire occurrence areas, location of MFC tractor/plow units and VFDs.
- County Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) – Currently 34 counties have these plans. The plans identify areas at risk to wildland fires. This includes public infrastructure and other important areas in the county.
- Location of Certified Prescribed Burn Managers – Target counties where there are few or no CPBs.
- Non-native invasive species priority areas for suppression/eradication in forest health section

#### **Issue 7: Climate Change**

- Priority areas for WRP (MS River Alluvial Plain ecoregion) \* **MULTI-STATE**
- Priority areas for CRP
- Open land (agriculture, pasture, open fields) adjacent to public lands
- Mature forests on public lands and adjacent private lands
- Forest Legacy Areas

#### **Issue 8: Wildlife**

- Conservation Priorities identified through the USDA State Technical Committee for Farm Bill programs such as CRP, WRP, WHIP, HFRP.
- Priority areas identified in the PFW and LIP programs.
- Priority areas identified in the Range-wide Conservation Plan for Longleaf Pine\* **MULTI-STATE**
- High ranking natural forest communities identified in CWCS
- Forest Legacy Areas
- Natural Areas identified by MS Natural Heritage Program (forested)
- High priority drainages identified by CWCS (Tombigbee, Northeast Hills/TN River, Pascagoula River, Lower Coastal Plain/Pearl River)
- Upper East Gulf Coastal Plain ecoregion
- East Gulf Coastal Plain ecoregion